

Site Name: Reigate Heath

County: Surrey

District: Reigate and Banstead

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and additional land notified under Section 28B of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Local Planning Authority: Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, Surrey County Council

National Grid reference: TQ236501

Area: 65.20 ha

Ordnance Survey Sheet: 1:50,000: 187

Date Notified: 30 May 1986

Date additional land notified: 30 October 2020

Reasons for notification:

This site encompasses a range of habitats including Reigate Heath itself which consists of open heath and acidic grassland, with some areas where bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and oak *Quercus robur* have become dominant. The site also includes alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland, and within the eastern boundary, some marshy meadows; these are the only examples of their type in Surrey that have not been destroyed by modern agricultural improvement. There is a golf course within the heathland area.

A small hill of the Lower Greensand series bears sandy acidic soils which support the heath and oak woodland. The remainder of the site lies over alluvium, overlain in turn by peat in the meadows.

The alder woods have a rich ground flora; in drier areas the dominant species are bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, while the wetter areas support marsh violet *Viola palustris*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and a county rarity, white sedge *Carex curta*.

The heath is composed of ling *Calluna vulgaris*, bell heather *Erica cinerea* and wavy hairgrass *Deschampsia flexuosa*. Many plants of sandy soils, such as petty whin *Genista anglica*, soft trefoil *Trifolium striatum* and the uncommon bird's-foot fenugreek *T. ornithopodioides* are also found here. In areas away from the golf fairways and footpaths birch *Betula pendula* scrub and bracken have largely replaced the plants of open heathland, and in many places this succession has developed further into oak-birch woodland with alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and some areas of pine *Pinus sylvestris*.

The marshy meadows support a lush sward of Yorkshire fog grass *Holcus lanatus* and sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, with abundant meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris* and marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*. They also contain a large colony of the southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* which is rare in Surrey.

The stream which runs along the eastern edge of the meadows provides a feeding area for birds such as kingfisher and heron.